

# Southfield Public Library

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## *SILVER SPARROW by Tayari Jones*

*Discussion questions used at SPL April 9 & 10, 2013*

1. Chaurisse calls Dana "silver" and there were several references to sparrows throughout the novel - that in the Bible, God is said to care for the sparrows and even more for people. Why, then, is the novel titled Silver Sparrow?
2. Who did you pity more - Dana or Chaurisse? Gwen or Laverne? Why?
3. What was Raleigh's role throughout the story? Is he culpable in any way?
4. Why do you think Raleigh is so loyal to James?
5. Should Gwen have married Raleigh when she had the chance?
6. Why do you think Gwen decided to turn Raleigh's offer of marriage down? Was it the right decision, in your opinion?
7. What did you think of Gwen asking Dana to decide if she should marry Raleigh?
8. Why did Gwen eventually decide to confront Laverne with the truth? Why did it take almost 18 years? Was Gwen wrong to confront Laverne?
9. Gwen tells Dana that they have an advantage over Laverne and Chaurisse because they know the truth. Is this true?
10. Is it possible to have a healthy relationship that is not monogamous?
11. There is so much talk these days about fatherhood --- contrasting the deadbeat dad with the Bill Cosby-type father. How do you evaluate James Witherspoon, who is both?
12. Both Dana and Chaurisse have relationships with older boys who don't necessarily treat them well. What do you think accounts for this?
13. Is Laverne's life better or worse for having married James? What about Gwen? Does James love Laverne or Gwen?
14. Tayari Jones often writes about the way real people interact with history, for example, Gwen's feelings about the death of Martin Luther King. How have you interacted with history? How did it affect your personal story?
15. Does Chaurisse have an obligation to be "sisterly" toward Dana once she learns they are related? By that token, does Dana have any obligation to Chaurisse, as a friend or as a sister?
16. What is the role of economics in this story?
17. The second half of the book is set in Laverne's salon, the Pink Fox. How does hair figure into this story? Do you think your own hair has impacted your life? For better or for worse?
18. Which of the characters was your favorite? Which characters would you like to know more about?
19. Who do you think sent the threatening/mysterious postcard to the Witherspoons' home at the end of the book?
20. Could this story have had a happy ending?
21. All the characters want a home and security. According to the author "the truth in this story is that everyone wants to be loved." How far will a person go to be secure and can you want security so badly that you destroy any chance of achieving it?

22. Ms. Jones has been quoted as saying that this is a story about being a daughter; the truth lies with the uneasy sense that may exist that you are not the chosen child. Have you felt this or can you understand that relationship between siblings and parents rivalry for affection, attention, and favor.



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## *General discussion questions*

- For the person who chose the book – What made you want to read it? What made you pick it for the book club? Did it live up to your expectations?
- How is the book structured? First person? Third person? Flashbacks? Narrative devices? Do you think the author did a good job with it?
- How would you describe the author's writing style? Concise? Flowery? How is language used in this book? Read aloud a passage that really struck you. How does that passage relate to the book as a whole?
- How effective is the author's use of plot twists? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened? Did the author keep you guessing until the end?
- Did the book hold your interest?
- How important is the setting to the story? Did you feel like you were somewhere else? Did the time setting make a difference in the story? Did the author provide enough background information for you to understand the setting and time placement?
- Which is stronger in the book – the characters or the plots?
- Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why? And to whom?

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## **His Eye Is On The Sparrow (written by By Civilla Durfee Martin)**

### Verse 1

Why should I feel discouraged,  
why should the shadows come,  
why should my heart be lonely,  
and long for heaven and home;  
when Jesus is my portion,  
my constant friend is He,

His eye is on the sparrow,  
and I know He watches me;  
His eye is on the sparrow,  
and I know He watches me.

### Chorus

I sing because I'm happy,  
I sing because I'm free,  
for His eye is on the sparrow,  
and I know He watches me.

### Verse 2

Let not your heart be troubled,  
His tender word I hear,  
and resting on His goodness,  
I lose my doubts and fears;  
though by the path He leadeth,  
but one step I may see;

His eye is on the sparrow,  
and I know He watches me;  
His eye is on the sparrow,  
and I know He watches me.

### Chorus

### Verse 3

Whenever I am tempted,  
whenever clouds arise,

when songs give place to sighing,  
when hope within me dies,  
I draw the closer to Him,  
from care He sets me free;

His eye is on the sparrow,  
and I know He watches me;  
His eye is on the sparrow,  
and I know He watches me.

The theme of the song is inspired by the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew in the Bible: "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26) and "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31).

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/His\\_Eye\\_Is\\_on\\_the\\_Sparrow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/His_Eye_Is_on_the_Sparrow)

Discussion Questions from The Reading Group Guide website

[http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides\\_s/silver\\_sparrow1.asp](http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides_s/silver_sparrow1.asp)